

Career center helps victims of misfortune get back on their feet

By Michael Morris

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PROVO — When Heidi Sorenson's husband left her last December, he said he no longer believed in marriage. As an unskilled homemaker suddenly faced with supporting four children under 8, she found it hard to believe in herself.

Sorenson's plight may sound anomalous to residents of family centered Utah Valley, but she's just one of about 10,000 local women who have become single parents or displaced homemakers forced to seek jobs and job training. About 4,000 more Utah Valley women need work or training because their husbands are unemployed, underemployed or disabled.

According to state statistics, 45 percent of the 38,000 Utah families headed by women live below the officially defined poverty line.

Fortunately for those women, resources such as the Center for Personal and Career Development at Utah Valley Community College help displaced homemakers and workers get back on their feet.

"We're proud of what we do," center director Anita Bradford told local legislators and a handful of women gathered recently at UVCC's Provo campus. Bradford lobbied legislators Eldon Money, Christine Fox, Tim Moran and Byron Harward to support the Utah Displaced Homemakers Act, which has provided money for the career center and its programs.

She said funding for the career center and eight similar programs in the state will end next year unless renewed by the Legislature. UVCC officials say the center will serve about 2,500 men and women this year, offering them vocational training and retraining, career-development skills, management courses and self-confidence.

"This particular program (at UVCC) serves more women than any other program in the state," Bradford said. "It's crucial for us that the Interim Education Committee recommend it (the act) to the Legislature."

She said funding for the center is money well spent. Of the women who enter the center's successful management course, for example, 85 percent become employed or enter vocational training. The average wage of those who complete the course is approximately \$7 per hour, Bradford said.

"We're very proud of what they do in terms of their hourly wage," she said. "But without funding, this won't happen. If it goes, this program goes."

Bradford said 55 percent of the program's funding has come from the state. The federal government and UVCC provide the rest.

"The people in this program stretch a dollar farther than anyone on campus," said Lucille Stoddard, acting college president. "But the elastic is about to break."

Bradford said the program saves the state money in the long run by reducing the number of people on welfare.

"You can't understand the impact (of the career center) until you look at individual lives," she said, adding that the center offers some of UVCC's most valuable programs.

Sorenson, who completed the center's 10-week Successful Life Management program, has enrolled at the University of Utah to pursue a journalism degree. The life-management program teaches assertiveness, career exploration, self-marketing skills, financial management, stress reduction and health.

"It gives us renewed hope," she said of the career center. "I think this program is one of the things that helped me get back on my feet. And I feel that I'm being a good example to my children."

Other women said the center helped them regain control of their lives. One woman, whose husband became disabled, said the center helped her evolve from "a person who was beaten . . . into a person who took control of what was going on."

Another woman said her children benefited from the program as much as she did.

Clot dissolver will be given immediately

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Clot-dissolving drugs like one approved last week are so effective in saving heart-attack victims they will soon be given in doctors' offices and even in ambulances, researchers say.

The reason they will be administered before the patient arrives at a hospital is that the drugs' effectiveness drops off rapidly with each hour that passes after a heart attack begins, researchers said Sunday.

An Italian study of 11,806 patients given streptokinase, one of the first clot-dissolving drugs, found that the death rate from heart attacks could be cut by 50 percent if the drug were given in the first hour after onset of chest pain.

If the drug was not given until the fourth hour after the heart attack began, the death rate was reduced by only 12 percent, said Dr. Robert Roberts, chief of cardiology at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

Last week, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved use of tissue plasminogen activator, or TPA, a naturally occurring substance that researchers say is in some respects superior to streptokinase.

"In two or three years, with everyone who has chest pain and minimal electrocardiogram changes, (doctors) are going to want to give TPA and see what happens," Roberts said at a conference held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Heart Association.

He noted that 70 percent of the patients who come to the hospital complaining of chest pain do not have heart attacks and therefore do not need the drugs.

But because it can take hours to confirm a heart attack, it is better to administer the drugs first, do the tests later, and then discontinue the drugs if a patient is not having a heart attack, Roberts said.

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